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***Your South Carolina source  
for professional development  
in language education***

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## ***Bridging the Language Assessment Gap***

*In teaching students for understanding, we must grasp the key idea that we are coaches of their ability to play the “game” of performing with understanding, not tellers of our understanding to them on the sidelines. (Mc Tighe & Wiggins, 2005)*

This professional development television series was created for language teachers to take a critical look at assessment design and what the national standards imply for student performance. Each episode uncovers ways in which you can use the standards to determine what students should be able to understand and then design the assessment that demonstrates that ability. You will see step by step how to construct standards-based performance assessments that align with key concepts and questions in the curriculum. These concepts and essential questions are those which are integral to understanding and functioning within the target culture. This guide provides materials and resources for you to examine and complete

before, during and after each television episode. At the end of each guide, ancillary materials in the *Resources* offer additional sources for examples and information.

Each of the five episodes is a self-contained module with goals and tasks for language teachers to review, revisit, and reflect. The five episodes comprise a complete series that will guide you toward designing the performance assessment system outlined in the template materials for the South Carolina language curriculum.

**This *Bridging the Language Assessment Gap* series will help you:**

- **Transfer the backward design process to all future planning.**
- **Discern and develop curricular thematic units.**
- **Create Integrated Performance Assessments (IPAs) in context.**
- **Integrate culturally authentic resources created by and for the culture.**
- **Facilitate learning that lasts.**

Watch the episodes in this series and use the materials in the guides for creating performance assessments which you can tailor to the language and culture of your class. Use the episodes and guides for working together with colleagues. You can use the episodes and guides to:

- ✓ Determine overarching ideas and questions for your unit themes.
- ✓ Design performance assessments on a unit theme.
- ✓ Develop these assessments at different levels with colleagues to aid in articulation.
- ✓ Collect and share culturally authentic materials with colleagues.
- ✓ Continue dialogue with colleagues via a focus group on performance assessment.
- ✓ Inform parents and administrators about language performance assessment and what learners should understand, know, and be able to do with the language as a result of your instruction and assessment goals.

## **Bridging the Language Assessment Gap**

### **Episode 2: What is Performance Assessment?**

*Think like an assessor, not an activity planner.*

*Wiggins, 2004.*

**Enduring Understanding:** Performance assessment most closely resembles what the learner will be expected to do in real life as is appropriate to the culture. These tasks are realized via the three modes of the Communication Standard.

**Essential Question:** What is Performance Assessment?

#### **Watch this episode:**

- To review Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions with Unit Themes.
- To determine what assessments are more aligned with performance goals in the Standards.
- To analyze your assessment system.
- To learn how to turn around tired tasks, moving from drill/mastery to performance.
- To design performance tasks like an assessor, rather than an activity planner.

#### **Key terms in Episode 2: What is Performance Assessment?**

Backward Design

GRASPS

Assessment Inventory

Planning for Game

Performance Assessment

Transfer

Drill/Mastery

Game-like

### **Before you watch**

Consider the following questions to reflect on performance criteria before you watch the episode.

- What does it mean to have your abilities tested, to “do” a subject or skill likely to be encountered in a real life situation?
- What are key indicators of true performance? Are situations always the same or do they change? How?
- What do your assessment tasks ask students to do? Do you have a variety of different assessment types?
- What products or performances would learners likely encounter or need to do in a given culture?

### **While you watch**

**As a review, here are the 3 stages in Language Assessment by Design**

- Desired Results
  - Big Idea and Enduring Understanding
  - Essential Questions
- Determine acceptable evidence (Integrated Performance Assessment—IPAs)
- Knowledge and Skills
- Plan learning experiences and Instruction
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Adapted from Wiggins, G. UbD (2005)



**Culture drives the big ideas, Understandings, and Essential Questions for unit themes. Connections, Communities, and Comparisons demonstrate cultural interpretation of unit themes. What do these imply for what students need to know and be able to do?**

In the last episode, we started to develop Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions by examining what our Standards imply. In designing these, always look to the Culture standard to pinpoint the “must-haves” or non-negotiables of a unit theme. Our Culture standard helps us uncover recursive themes throughout a program and along the life-span of the learner, such as family life, leisure, personal identification, health, and house and home, just to name a few. The Culture standard drives the curriculum, in that you will always ask what your culture thinks, feels and says or how it responds culturally to a theme: Food and Meal taking for example. By addressing the Culture standard first, answering what you want students to go away and remember about that theme, you are doing three very important things:

- ✓ You *give purpose and coherence* to the knowledge and skills one will need later for the assessment, rather than asking for recall of skills in isolation. Learners will remember material better when it is connected to a theme that recurs, allowing them to transfer more readily the knowledge and skills acquired.
- ✓ You automatically *engage the Standards of Comparison, Communities, and Connections* which demonstrate the cultural interpretation of the unit theme. Cultural practices, products, and perspectives are revealed as learners uncover the theme over time, allowing for comparisons with their own cultures and application of this interdisciplinary content to real life contexts encountered outside the classroom. This further facilitates your assessment system because your best evidence of learner understanding will be with tasks which require students to use their repertoire of knowledge and skills in situations they are likely to encounter in the target culture.
- ✓ You *focus on what is truly worthy of understanding*, the concepts, the “moral” of the story or lesson learned about the culture vis-à-vis that unit theme, allowing for careful decisions on what assessment will demonstrate that understanding. Your enduring

understanding and essential questions have tremendous implications on assessment. What you will ask students to know and be able to do with the language within a given culture becomes clear. You will become more selective in terms of what knowledge and skills are required for that assessment, thus reducing the amount of unrelated material. When you uncover these understandings over time, you eliminate the pressure of burdensome “coverage” that is the bane of a content and activity driven curriculum. The content and skills are there, but they have been carefully chosen to move the learner closer to understanding the concept, addressing the standard, and realizing a performance goal.



**What do you want learners to go away with and remember about the culture vis-à-vis the unit theme? How does your culture respond to ideas on family life, school, leisure time, or meal taking? (Eddy, 2005)**



**Activity: Take 10 minutes to write or review the enduring understanding for a unit theme and a corresponding essential question that relates to the understanding.**

Example Unit Themes:

My friends and I

School life

Leisure Time

Meal taking

Shopping

My community

### **Enduring Understandings:**

- Transfer to other topics and real life.
- Provide conceptual foundation for basic skills.
- Are deliberately framed as a generalization: the moral of the story.

### **Essential Questions**

What essential questions from our unit themes

- are important to argue about?
- are at the heart of the culture?
- recur - and should recur?
- raise more questions – provoking and sustaining engaged inquiry?
- must become habits of mind when we face real problems?
- often raise important conceptual or strategic issues?
- can provide organizing purpose for meaningful & connected learning?

### Sample Enduring Understanding and Essential Question

#### Unit Theme: My Friends and I

Enduring Understanding:

- Friendships result from both personal similarities and differences. Our interests are influenced by culture.

Essential Questions:

- What factors influence your choice of friends?
- How are personal interests influenced by the target culture?



**The Communication standard determines the assessment mode.**

Performance Assessment provides the learner with evidence of what it means to “do” the subject, to have your abilities tested in situations they may encounter in the target culture. This kind of assessment will require the learner to take stock of what they know and are able to do, and use that repertoire appropriately in a given situation. This means that the

learner understands that situations change and flexibility is essential. They may or may not have resources or cues to guide them. Their ability to transfer knowledge and skills to new contexts not previously encountered is a key indicator of success in using a language.

What does true performance look like in a language class? Consider what happens anytime you communicate: Interactions are non-scripted, information has gaps. Materials are not filtered, arranged cleanly or adapted. People always must sift through anything they hear or see to get precisely what they need to solve a problem or create a product of any use. These are characteristics of tasks or assessments that simulate what it is like to be “in the game” or doing whatever the subject is in real life. It is not drill, or mastery of facts. The practice of isolated pieces is not an indicator of success or performing well in the game. The game is not the sum of the drills. Without transfer tasks that include the characteristics above, the learner will not be able to develop the flexibility required when faced with unexpected situations they will encounter in the target culture. These characteristics reinforce why performance tasks require transfer, and that transfer is the hallmark of a well designed performance task in a language class. In short, you need to plan for the game.



**The goal of all learning is flexible transfer.**

Learner assessment is consistently too low-level and narrow – not focused on transfer, but ‘plugging in’. Learners need experiences dealing with unfamiliar situations, problems, and to expect variation from how a concept was originally taught. This requires tasks that enable that flexibility – learning how to adapt content to purpose.



**Do your students forget, misunderstand concepts, or can only use material the way it was taught?**

Use of knowledge and skills on your own in new situations and contexts means that transfer has happened. It requires inference and negotiation of meaning; not just amassing of facts and completing a drill. Without understanding, the language learner forgets, misunderstands a concept, or only knows it in the rigid, predictable context in which it was taught.



**Solution: Assess for transfer.**

Exemplary assessment design engages the learner in transfer tasks that are stripped of cues or reliance on drill of one item repeatedly, rather than testing for the concept or standard that created the item. Using a language appropriately in a given culture requires high adaptability, tolerance of new situations, dealing with incomplete information, and problem-solving with minimal or no cues. Assessment that most closely meets these criteria will be your best evidence of understanding.

**What are the key indicators of true performance in a language?**

Drills have their place, but they can never be confused with tasks designed for performance. In other professions drills on one particular area of knowledge or skill are not indicative of how the person will perform when they are on the field, in the game, at the actual setting and “doing” a given situation in real life. Again, the game is not the sum of the drills. Planning for practice is less important than planning for the game.

**Think like an assessor for valid evidence, not as an activity planner.**

- Gather all of your assessments, projects, tasks, and activities—anything learners do.
- They all are assessments.
- Some have more power than others.
- Some may be excellent but are not being used as evidence when they could be.



Activity: Take time now if you have not already done so to gather all assessments, tests, quizzes, project descriptions, activities, etc.

Let's do an Assessment Inventory. We will be categorizing all of your tests, quizzes, assignments, projects, activities, tasks, etc. These are all assessments. Please keep the following questions in mind:

- Could the learner do the task well, but not really understand the target understanding in any depth?
- Could the learner do the task without meeting the Communication Standard?
- Could the learner do poorly on the task or test but for reasons that do not have anything to do with the understanding?

Putting Assessments in their place!

Do an inventory and categorize your assessments in 3 ways

- Drill: plug in, recall, familiar prompt
- Game-like: tasks where there are sufficient cues that suggest the approach to use, step-by-step instructions
- The game: task with no cues on how to solve; unfamiliar or new situation requiring creative adaptation and adjustment



We often confuse drills with the “Game”. Here are drills and Game contrasted:

- ‘Drill-tests’ – test items/exercises
- Out of context
- Discrete, isolated element
- Unrealistically setup and prompted
- Doesn’t transfer without practice in adapting it to new situations
- The ‘game’ – real task, problems
- In context, with all its messiness and interest value
- Requires a repertoire, used wisely
- Not prompted: you judge what to do and when



Activity: Take time now to categorize your assessments into 3 piles:

Drill/Mastery

Game-like

Game

Drill/Mastery	Game-like	Game

This small table below shows activities in their categories. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it gives a representative sample of how to consider each task along a transfer continuum. The more game-like and game a task is, the closer it will help learners achieve a performance goal. Some activities that are game-like can be adapted to Game, and vice versa. Although formative assessments may be game-like, it is recommended that all summative performance tasks be Game.

<u>Drill</u>	<u>Game-like</u>	<u>Game</u>
Fill-in Quiz	Write a dialogue with script	Design a brochure of town for new student
Chapter test		Listen for key info at the train station
Match picture with word		
Jeopardy	Create a timeline of cultural history	Debate
Pictionary		Plan a party with a friend, non scripted
Endings of irregular preterites	Ask questions With prompts	Write a message from a telephone call

**In moving tasks to transfer, keep these in mind:**

- What does this help me to do? Why are we learning this? The art student, the music student and the athlete can always answer this.
- We need to make worthy and meaningful transfer tasks. Many textbook assessments fail that criterion.
- What does it mean to “do” the subject? What do real people DO?

You can create many performance assessments using the acronym, GRASPS (Wiggins, 2004.)

These are real world goals, to create a product within a context or challenge for a particular audience. Performance tasks set up this way give the learner clear targets and real world application that is never found in decontextualized test items or contrived model prompts.

- Goal—this is the set up, outlining the task, obstacles, and goal.
- Role—this is who the student is, for this task, and what their job is.
- Audience—the target audience or clients. Who they need to impress or convince.
- Situation—this is the challenge, the context the student is in.
- Product—this is what the student creates, develops, and for what purpose
- Standards—these are the criteria by which the work will be judged.

## Products and Performances

<b>Advertisement</b>	<b>Rap</b>
<b>Biography</b>	<b>Skit</b>
<b>Brochure</b>	<b>Song</b>
<b>Collection</b>	<b>Cartoon</b>
<b>Editorial or TV news cast</b>	<b>Collage</b>
<b>Historical fiction</b>	<b>Video</b>
<b>Letter</b>	<b>Game</b>
<b>Newspaper article</b>	<b>Poster</b>
<b>Play</b>	<b>Powerpoint show</b>
<b>Poem</b>	<b>Questionnaire or survey</b>
<b>Debate</b>	<b>Story</b>
<b>Dramatization</b>	<b>Web site</b>
<b>Puppet show</b>	<b>Scrapbook or Museum display</b>

Jennifer Eddy (2006)

Here is a preview of what the performance tasks can look like, using our unit theme example “My Friends and I”:

# My Friends and I

- Context:
- An exchange student will be arriving soon at your school and will be in your class. You are curious about what students are like in his/her home country and how they are similar or different from you and your friends.

## Example of Transfer-My Friends and I

- Interpretive Task
- First, listen to the new student give information about his or her best friend, then answer questions based on the information you hear.
- Interpersonal Task
- Now that you know about the new student's friends, talk with three of your classmates about the characteristics and interests of their own friends.
- Presentational Task
- Finally, write a note to the exchange student describing yourself so that he or she can identify you at the airport.

Jennifer Eddy (2006)

## The Fit and Flow of IPAs

### Integrated Performance Assessment

#### Interpretive Mode Tasks React to info, infer

#### Interpersonal Mode Tasks Acquire new info, negotiate

#### Presentation Mode Tasks Create a product, recreate text

Presentation mode

Interpretive mode

Interpersonal mode

Jennifer Eddy (2006)



**Are most of your tasks drill/mastery or game-like?**

Let's do turnarounds for tired tasks and memorized minutia.

Objective: Using commands effectively.

Task: Write a command with each infinitive.

Turnaround:

Making good choices is a good step in staying healthy.

You are a doctor and your patients have a lot of bad habits. Design a brochure to hand out that gives advice and tips on a healthy lifestyle.

Objective: To know the tourist sites in Mexico.

Task: Matching column to test locations of tourist sites

Turnaround:

Where people choose to travel depends a lot on their interests and needs.

You are a travel agent specializing in travel to Mexico. Your clients are all different. Create an itinerary suited for each group, keeping in mind the possible interests and needs of the client.

1. A family of 5 with young children.
2. A businessperson who is a history buff.
3. Three college students with a limited budget.
4. Grandparents who love small towns, local crafts, and music.

Hint: Now that you have designed the assessment, what knowledge and skills is necessary to do that assessment? Determining this after the assessment is made, helps you focus on the essentials and what is worthy, rather than being mired in a curriculum of coverage and excess content that is often soon forgotten or misunderstood.



Activity: Create performance tasks using the GRASPS format. After you create one, decide what specific knowledge, skills, and strategies are needed to do the assessment.

**At this point in your Unit Plan, you will determine so far:**

- Enduring Understandings for your unit theme.
- Essential Questions that correspond to the Understandings.
- Acceptable Evidence: Assessment that aligns with the above and that demonstrates transfer.

### **Reprise, Review, Revisit, Reflect**

What is an enduring understanding? What is not? With a few colleagues, examine some enduring understandings. Ask yourselves the following questions:

Does this understanding allow for continuous uncoverage or unpackaging over time and is written as a moral or lesson from the cultural response to the theme? After all the details have fallen away, is it what you want students to remember about the culture and this topic? If so, then good. Is it disconnected from culture, presenting a grammatical issue in isolation? Is the



understanding written as a goal or a “Students Will Be Able To”? If it is, then is it not an enduring understanding.

What is an essential question? What is not? Now with colleagues, look at your essential questions and determine if they truly are essential with the following questions:

Is this question really essential? Does it yield a pat answer? If the question can be answered with yes or no, or is so narrow that it is answered completely in one or two class periods, then it is not an essential question. Does it relate to the understanding? Good essential questions promote understanding of transferable concepts in language and culture which are uncovered over time, between levels, grades, and along the lifespan of the learner.

Are these questions really knowledge and skills? If so, it belongs there only after you designed your assessment and is not an essential question. Questions such as “how do I use preterite and imperfect” are not essential questions.

Performance Assessment will determine if the learner students have resolved misunderstandings and can use the information on their own in unpredictable or new situations. Transfer depends upon understanding the recurrent, big ideas that connect otherwise isolated facts, skills, and experiences. When the learner can take these and apply them flexibly in real situations and new contexts on their own, you know that transfer has occurred. The learner is closer to the goal, the game, which is the gold standard evidence for any performance situation encountered in the target language. Getting them there is not an accident; it requires assessment tasks that are more game-like and game as they move closer to the goal. Your assessments must move to transfer, to contexts they are unfamiliar with and must deal with in the real world.

#### Planning for the Game—Tips to keep in mind

- ✓ Transfer tasks provide the key evidence of understanding.
- ✓ Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions must focus the work, along with the transfer tasks.
- ✓ Good design is best done “backward” from the desired results.
- ✓ Create the transfer task that matches.

After creating the transfer task we determine

- Knowledge and skills necessary

- Strategies for learning
- Guided practice and interim assessments

In Backward Design, these six facets of understanding (Wiggins, 2004) guide us to generate ideas for performance tasks. Use these descriptors to help you design performance tasks that move closer to transfer and “the game”.

- Students show they understand when they can:
  - Describe-explain-justify-persuade-show
  - Interpret-illustrate-represent
  - Create-design-solve-propose-construct
  - Compare-debate-evaluate-critique
  - Walk in the shoes of-imagine-empathize
  - Revise-self assess-adjust-reflect upon

**Complete the following before the next broadcast: “Why are the three modes of communication integral to the cycle of assessment?”**

- Create at least two Enduring Understandings for your Unit Theme.
- Create at least two Essential Questions that align with the understandings for your Unit Theme.
- Gather all of your assessments, tasks, activities, and project descriptions for an inventory.
- Design a GRASPS task.
- Do a Turnaround for at least two of your assessments, making them more game-like or game.
- Write outstanding questions about assessment. Submit them to the web site.

**Remember...**

**Think like an assessor.**

**Consider all tasks and activities as assessment.**

**Some assessments have more power than others.**

**Have a balance of assessment types.**

## **Plan for the game.**

### **Resources**

Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices

<http://learner.org/resources/series185.html>

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3392>

ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners

<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3327>

Understanding by Design Materials

[http://ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.book/menuitem.ccf6e1bf6046da7cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?](http://ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.book/menuitem.ccf6e1bf6046da7cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?bookMgmtId=eadc6f98543c2010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD)

[bookMgmtId=eadc6f98543c2010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD](http://ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.book/menuitem.ccf6e1bf6046da7cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?bookMgmtId=eadc6f98543c2010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD)

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